Revision in price of natural gas

1601. SHRIMATI S.G. INDIRA : Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government are considering to hike the price on LPG as reported in the press;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether it is also a fact that Government had already increased the price on natural gas; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI DINSHA J. PATEL): (a) There is no such proposal currently under consideration of the Government.

(b) Does not arise in view of (a) above.

(c) and (d) With effect from the midnight of 5th/6th June, 2006 the price of Administered Pricing Mechanism (APM) gas has been revised to Rs. 3,840/MSCM for general consumers and Rs. 2,304/MSCM for North-East consumers.

Enhancement of powers to OVL Board

1602. SHRIMATI SHOBHANA BHARTIA: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether ONGC Videsh Ltd. (OVL) has asked Government to enhance the powers of OVL Board to approve projects involving investment up to Rs. 1000 crore to take up projects abroad;

(b) whether OVL has been empowered to invest only up to Rs. 300 crore;

(c) whether Dr. V. Krishnamurthy's Committee made recommendation forenhancing the empowerment of OVL Board from the current limit of Rs.300 crore from any single investment, to a level of at least Rs. 2,000crore; and

(d) whether Government have agreed to this?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI DINSHA J. PATEL): (a) and (b) The Board of Directors of OVL is now empowered to take decision on investments of Rs. 300 crore or US$ 75 million whichever is less, beyond which investment proposals are required to be recommended by the Empowered Committee of Secretaries for obtaining the approval of the Government. OVL's proposal for further enhancement of the empowerment to Rs. 1000 crore, in line with the powers granted to the Board of Directors of Navaratna companies, is under consideration of the Government.

(c) Yes, Sir. The V. Krishnamurthy Committee in its recommendation has stated that for any single investment the present limit of Rs. 300 crore be raised to the level of Rs. 2000 crore.

(d) The matter is under consideration of the Government.

Foreign exchange earned from tourists

1603. SHRI S. ANBALAGAN: Will the Minister of TOURISM be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the country still lags behind many countries in attracting foreign tourists despite the availability of numerous historic, natural and religious spots in the country;

(b) if so, the comparative figures of number of foreign tourists visited our country and countries such as China during each of the last three years alongwith the foreign exchange earned thereon;

(c) whether Government have ascertained the reasons for poor incoming of foreign tourists; and

(d) if so, the details thereof and the steps proposed to be taken thereon?

THE MINISTER OF TOURISM (SHRIMATI AMBIKA SONI): (a) India's rank in foreign tourist arrivals in the world was 47 during 2004. This is an improvement over the earlier years when its rank was 50 during the year 2003 and 54 during 2002.